A

LETTER

FROM THE

WEST

To a MEMBER of the Meeting of ESTATES of

SCOTLAND

SIR,

SInce I cannot be ſo ſoon at the Convention, to talk with you, therefore I have ſent you my Thoughts, in this line, as to what Regards the *Government* of the *Church*, which may be there, or thereafter handled.

The *Convention* no doubt has great buſineſs before them, but that which in all probability will make no ſmall buzle, is the *Affair of Religion*; It were certainly a thing very much to be wiſhed, if that Meeting could fall upon ſuch Methods, as might adjuſt *Presbytry* and *Epiſcopacy*, who theſe *hundred years* bygone, have been juſtling each Other by Turns.

You will doubtleſs accord with me, that it had been happy for this Kingdom, if the *Reformation* here had not been big at one and the ſame time with theſe Twains, the ſtriſe of whoſe *primogeniture* has coſt us ſo dear; Whence, I pray, all *our inteſtine wars*, *Jars Domeſtick*, Do not they all flow from thence? And who ſhall free us of the like *Animoſities* in time coming? If former *Epiſcopacy* get footing, ſhall we not ſee the great inconveniencies of *conge d'elires*, and the looſneſs of the *Clergy* ariſing from thence? And ſhall we not be again ſtraitned by theſe Oaths, which were purpoſely ſet on foot to propogat that intereſt?

And if *presbytry* in its old Extent rule the Roſt, ſhall We not be Diſciplined even to cruelty, and whipt with *ſcorpions*? And then muſt we not renew the *Covenant*, and vomit up all Oaths contrare thereunto? Tho I believe, that both *Covenant* and *Teſt* were formed

ned by *Church Men*; to Ruine each other by Turns, and were Tricks of *Kirk* and *Church*? Yet many of both perswasions have taken them honestly, and their Consciences would fly in their Faces if they should unsay them. Who shall then secure us, I say, if *presbytry* get up, but We must foreswear the *Test*, which tho we took with some scruple, as We ought to do all such Oaths, yet, *quia juramum est*, and that we were called thereto by our Employments, we cannot do it without great Reluctancy, I shall not word it otherwise.

I say yet farther, if *presbytrie* be planted, we cannot be allowed to joyn with that *Society*, except we come up their length, and *perfection* our selves up to the *Geneva* form; And tho they may now pretend Moderation, that they may get their *finger in the pye*; Yet we are not ignorant of their known *maxime*, **Not a Hoof**; For by the Nature of that Government, ye *must take All, or None*. For *presbytry* (as they say) being *Jure Divino*, it is so in its all and every part, for he is blind that ever saw much of their *Brotherly condescention to scrupulous consciences*: And how can it be otherwise, since it is avouched by most of them as a principle, *That there ought to be no Liberty of Conscience to Dissenters*; Viz. when themselves are upmost.

We can no where understand the Spirit of Our *Scots presbytry*, so well as in these printed Acts of their *General Assembly*, and if you will be pleased to turn them over, you will find that by *Act Gen: Assemb: Anno* 1643: *page* 5: "*It is Ordained, That all Ministers* "*thereafter proceed with the Censures of the Kirk against such as shall re-* "*fuse to subscribe the Covenant.* And we are not to learn what they mean by these Censures, nothing less than the **Dreadful sentence of Excommunication, The delivering of Men over to the Meikle Devil.** And Metamorphosing them **in Coups Garrous and Shelly Coats**. And they must be rendered poor Devils to the boot; For its resolved *Act Gen: Assembly, Anno* 1643. *page* 30. "*That the Executions of the sentence of Excommunica-* "*tion against persons Excommunicate after the space of* 40 *days past,* "*shall be presented to the Lord Thesaurer, or his Clerk, who shall there-* "*upon raise Letters by Deliverance of the Lords of Session, to charge the*

persons

" *persons excommunicate to satisfie the Kirk, and to obtain themselves ab-*
" *solved, under the pain of Rebellion, and in case they pass to the Hun, to*
" *cause their Escheats to be taken up, and also to raise and cause Ex-*
" *ecute Letters of Caption against them, and these to be done at the* Kings
" Majesties Charge. Item, Act Gen: Assemb: Anno 1648: page
" 44. *It is Ordained, That all Young Students take the* Covenant *at*
" *their first entrie to* Colledges, *And that hereafter, all persons whatso-*
" *ever take the* Covenant *at their first receiving of the* Sacrament of the
" LORD, Supper.

I am not to Enquire into the Dukes Engagement (which by the Undertakers then, was thought both Noble and necessar) But I am to tell you, the Assemblies sense of it, for they say, *Act Gen. Assemb: Anno* 1648: *page* 16: " *Suppose* (say they) *the ends*
" *of this Engagement to be good* (*which they are not*) *yet the means and*
" *wayes of prosecution are unlawful, because there is not an equal avoid-*
" *ing of Rocks on both hands, but a joyning of* Malignants *to suppress*
" *Sectaries, a joyning hands with a* Black Devil, *to beat a* Whyte
" Devil"; so far the Canon. It was questioned (and perhaps not impertinently) by the Committe of Estates at that time: If the *presbyterians* could Demonstrate from the Word of GOD, That the Kirk has interest in the Undertakings and Engagements of War? It was answered, By a *Distinguo*, as you will find *Act Gen. Assemb: Anno* 1684: *page* 28: But I appeal to any indifferent Man who shall consider the place, if there be not a door opened (allowing the practise to be lawful) notwithstanding of the Distinction to the Successors of that Kirk, to intermeddle with the Affairs of Princes, in what concerns Peace and War.

Perhaps it has not been amiss, that these parcels of the Acts of their *General Assembly* have been drawn forth, for it is from that Fountain, we may best understand the Spirit of our Presbyterie. And since these *Presbyterian Divines* who composed these Acts, did endeavour to follow at as great nearness as they could, the Foot-steps of their Predecessors, as you will find, by the pains they take in the beginning of their Acts, to prove that the written Registers that they had fallen upon were Authentick. It's not likely that the *Presbyters* of our time, if such shall get footing

ing, will chalk out new wayes to themselves, there being but few *Hendersons*, *Gillespies*, *Rutherfoords* among us. God forbid that I should not otherways have great Charity for the Men, and likewayes Respect for that Government as practised in other places, but there is this *Malheur* that follows that Government with us, that the managers thereof drive too hard, and think they cannot build aright, except they build upon the Ruines of all those that shall but in the least differ from them.

Yet let us suppose, we shall not in thir wiser times, run the resque of *Excommunication* for not coming up their length, yet except we be purged from all Oaths contrair to the *Covenant*, we cannot be allowed to be Members of their Society, and where then shall we have the benefit of *Communion*, *Baptism*, *Marriage*? &c. there being we suppose no other then the *Presbyterian Kirk* in being in *Scotland*.

To shun then these Precipies, were it not more proper for us to examine, whether or not the Plea for *Presbyterian Government* as we practise it, be all of an Absolute necessity, so that we cannot win over it? or whether or not, there may be as much said for moderat *Episcopacie*? call it (if you please) *Superintendencie* or *Prefidency*; I am very unfit to dip in that long debate, there is so much said for both sides in King *Charles* the *I.* His conferrence with the Ministers at *Newport*; and with that exactness that hardly can any thing be added thereto, and it will appear thereby to any Indifferent man, that there is as much said there (at the least) for *Episcopacy* as *Presbyterie*, and *Episcopacy* has clearly the Church History upon its side; and as to the Authorities adduced from Scripture in favours of *Presbytery*, I appeal to any disinteressed Man, if they will all of them amount to prove a positive establishment of *Presbytery*? But only that there were several Acts which had reference to the Church, wherein the *Presbytery* and people Respective had a hand, but it must still be remembred that the Apostles did at the same time *Superintend*. And since now we cannot have Apostles, it were much to be wish'd that we had Apostolick Men, Pious, Grave, and Learned Divines, gathered out of both Perswasions set over the rest, where-

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the *Tyrannick Power* which arises from the abuse of *Episcopacy*; and the Confusion that arises from Parity, might be equally shun'd, and that a Brotherly condescension, may be allowed to those that have not agreed, nor cannot agree with the rest in all things, since we have but one *Faith*, one *Baptism*, &c. and that it shall be altogether put out of the Power of *Church men* to inferr Oaths new or old, or to set the State upon it.

I am

March 9. 1639.

SIR,

Your Humble Servant,